

1. YOUTH COUNCIL

Officer responsible
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The purpose of this report is to present to the Council a process for restructuring the current format of Youth Council to foster a strong youth voice in the city. The report also reiterates a suggested plan for youth participation on which further consultation is proposed.

BACKGROUND

In late 1999 the Youth Advocate raised concerns regarding the need for the Council to clarify the role of the Youth Council and to clarify the status of the Youth Council.

Information about ongoing structural and operational challenges, along with two separate review reports were presented to this Subcommittee on 11 April 2002. These reports had been prepared by Sarah Wylie (December 1999) and the Policy Unit of Christchurch City Council (2002). The Youth Advocate's report discussed replacing the current Youth Council structure with a multi-faceted approach to youth participation, one facet of which included the possibility of supporting an autonomous "youth voice" in the city, a "youth council" outside the Council.

On 23 May 2002 the Christchurch City Council resolved:

1. *That the line budget item "Youth Council" be redirected to encompass wide youth participation initiatives and renamed to reflect this.*
2. *That an approach be made to the local branch of NZAAHD (New Zealand Association of Adolescent Health and Development) to determine whether or not they would be prepared to act as an umbrella group for a "youth voice" in the city.*
3. *That the Youth Council be restructured and the current Youth Councillors be provided with participation opportunities in accordance with their interests.*
4. *That a comprehensive youth database be developed as a tool to help in directing interested young people toward participation opportunities.*
5. *That the Youth Workers' Collective be included in discussions on the future of youth participation.*

PETITION

At the Council meeting held on 23 May 2002 Councillor Corbett tabled a petition signed by 88 persons, urging the Council not to disband the Christchurch Youth Council. It was resolved that the petition be referred to the Community and Leisure Committee, and that it be considered as part of the restructuring process. Hence its inclusion in this report.

The prayer of the petition reads:

SAVE OUR YOUTH COUNCIL!

We, the undersigned, strongly believe that there should be a range of Christchurch City Council initiatives to encourage youth participation in local government and that, as one of those initiatives, the Christchurch Youth Council should serve as a permanent youth voice in Christchurch. We believe that a Council-supported Youth Council will be a stronger and more effective force for young people and urge the council not to disband it.

In response to the petition it is important to stress that the comprehensive youth participation strategy planned is designed to increase the level of youth participation in Council decision-making, and indeed retain Council financial and advocacy support.

It is agreed that there should be a range of Christchurch City Council initiatives to encourage youth participation and that the Council should support a strong youth voice in the city. These points are all covered in the proposed plan.

THE PROPOSED PLAN FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION

It is envisaged that there would be a multi-tiered approach. The key elements would be:

Special Interest Forums: These would be run with community partners. Examples that have happened over the last few years include:

- North West Youth Summit (information from this forum has been drawn on regularly by Council staff and a range of organisations operating in the North West)
- Global Voice (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child)
- Youth Mental Health Forum Youth Day: An opportunity for young people to feed their thoughts about youth mental health issues through to those who work or live with young people.

Youth Roundtables: An opportunity for Council staff and elected members of the Council to touch base with young people around the city to get feedback on specific issues and/or general feedback on how life is for them in the city. Roundtables usually consist of between 20 and 30 young people sitting down with staff and/or elected members preferably in a casual setting. On occasions a youth facilitator may be used. The young people may belong to a particular youth organisation, be geographically clustered, have a special common interest, or belong to the same cultural group. These are “one offs” and the concerns and ideas put forward by young people are taken up with relevant units of the Council, or (when relevant) other organisations.

Youth Data Base: Through a recruitment campaign in schools, youth organisations, venues popular with young people, and the media, a database of young people and their interests will be established. This will then be utilised on an ongoing basis to match the interests of young people with participation opportunities within the city – particularly within the Council. As well as indicating their interests, young people could indicate their preferred method(s) of input. For example some may prefer electronic consultation and others may want to become involved in planning teams, or provide occasional advice to staff or elected members. Advice will be sought from the Council’s Legal Services Unit regarding Privacy Act implications and how we work within any limitation imposed by this Act. (Note: The Council has supported this concept – see resolution 4 above.)

An Independent Youth Voice: Council to approach the Canterbury Youth Workers’ Collective and the Canterbury branch of the New Zealand Association of Adolescent Health and Development to seek its assistance and advice in developing an organisation for young people wanting to have a strong voice in the city. Such an organisation could be supported by the Council in a number of ways but retain its independence. Support may include funding to ensure the group can have administrative assistance.

Strong linkages with the Council would be encouraged. These may include (but not be limited to):

- A monthly meeting with the Youth Advocate or a representative of the Youth Advocate
- Regular input into the Children and Youth Subcommittee (and/or Community & Leisure Committee)
- Attendance at relevant standing committee and full Council meetings
- Deputations by appointment

It is hoped that a broad based youth organisation will agree to act as an “umbrella” for such an initiative.

A STRONG YOUTH VOICE

The aim is to have an autonomous “youth voice” which is run by young people for young people and is named appropriately by young people. This would be supported by but not controlled by the Council. It may come under the umbrella of a broad base youth focused organisation. Provision would be made for strong linkages between the youth organisation and the Council so that whilst retaining their autonomy, the young people could be assured of a system for having their views heard by the Council on a regular basis. Ultimately it is hoped that this will lead to shared decision-making and collaboration with adults who can serve as resources both within the Council and other organisations in the city.

A SUGGESTED RESTRUCTURING PROCESS

A meeting to be held comprising representation from the Council’s Youth Advocacy Office, the Youth Workers’ Collective, the New Zealand Association for Adolescent Health and Development and a representative from the education sector. This meeting would discuss:

- How best to involve a diverse group of young people to be involved in the restructuring process
- Whether or not an umbrella group would be needed and if so, who may best be suited to this role?
- What resources and support would an autonomous “youth voice” require if it went ahead.

It is important that this meeting is held prior to bringing young people on board to act as joint partners in driving the restructuring process, as we need to know the level of support and involvement these groups are prepared to have so that when young people are involved they have a framework to work within.

It is acknowledged that when young people do come on board it is likely that they will have ideas which do not fit with the support structures on offer. Should this be the case the ideas will be discussed openly to see if there is any room for negotiation with those who have offered support.

This meeting will not make decisions about how the “youth voice” should ultimately look, as it is very important that an enthusiastic and representative group of young people work on a shared vision and an organisational structure that will support that vision. They must be given the opportunity to develop a structure that they believe will advance young people’s participation in their communities and the city as a whole, but they must know why they are being involved and what support they can expect from the Council and other youth agencies within the city.

At this meeting it is hoped to develop an initial plan and to timeline for the restructuring process, although it must be understood that once young people become involved it may be necessary to adapt these to ensure that their ideas and circumstances are incorporated.

In effect what is proposed is to progress the restructuring through a Special Interest Forum. It is envisaged that an independent facilitator will be used.

NATURAL + PEOPLE + ECONOMIC STEP ASSESSMENT

#	CONDITION:	Meets condition ✓/0*	HOW IT HELPS MEET CONDITION:
The Natural Step			
N1	Reduce non-renewable resource use	0	NA
N2	Eliminate emission of harmful substances	0	NA
N3	Protect and restore biodiversity and ecosystems	0	NA
N4	People needs met fairly and efficiently	NA	NA - See People Step + Economic Step
The People Step			
P1	Basic needs met	0	
P2	Full potential developed	✓✓	Involvement in decision making
P3	Social capital enhanced	✓✓	Wide range of participation opportunities
P4	Culture and identity protected	✓✓	Diversity valued
P5	Governance and participatory democracy strengthened	✓✓	Meaningful participation by those too young to vote
The Economic Step			
E1	Effective and efficient use of all resources	✓	Broadening use of youth participation budget
E2	Job rich local economy	✓	Young peoples skills may be enhanced through participation and mentoring
E3	Financial sustainability	0	NA

Councillor Corbett recorded his thanks to the Children and Youth Subcommittee for providing him with a copy of the report.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the information be received.
 2. That the proposed restructuring process be approved with the addition of a member of the current Youth Council to be included at the initial meeting noted in the suggested restructuring process.
 3. That, as part of the restructuring process, the possibility of establishing a junior Youth Council as part of the structure be considered.